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Chairman: Mr. Galluska ..... (Czech Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 106: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/54/56, 57, 59, 61 and Corr.1, 62, A/54/66-E/1999/6, A/54/98, A/54/128-E/1999/70, A/54/256, 268 and 388; A/C.3/54/L.2)

1. **Mr. Howell** (International Labour Organization) said that central to the mandate of the International Labour Organization (ILO) was a commitment to social development that went hand in hand with economic advance. ILO was working to combat poverty everywhere by promoting job creation. In November 1999, it would be hosting international consultations on the theme of promoting full, productive and freely chosen employment. In addition, it would be holding the Second ILO Enterprise Forum, with the participation of many business leaders.

2. With the adoption by the International Labour Conference in 1998 of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, ILO member States had demonstrated their desire to promote, realize and respect freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of forced labour and child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in employment. The Organization's commitment to social development had also been reflected in the launching of priority programmes to address its four strategic objectives, namely, the promotion and realization of fundamental rights at work, the improvement of opportunities for women and men to secure decent jobs and incomes, the enhancement of social protection, and the strengthening of tripartism and social dialogue.

3. In 1998, the International Labour Conference had called on member States to adopt balanced economic growth strategies, increase spending on education and develop innovative programmes aimed at, *inter alia*, promoting enterprise among young people to combat high youth unemployment and unemployment among disabled persons and members of ethnic minorities. In particular, ILO had been closely involved in promoting the youth employment aims of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. It had also played an active role in the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon 1998) and the United Nations World Youth Forum.

4. ILO Recommendation No. 162 (1980) concerning Older Workers set out measures aimed at protecting the right of older persons to equal treatment in the workplace. The current International Year of Older Persons was an opportunity to consider how older workers adapted to new skills, whether early retirement should be used as a tool for alleviating youth unemployment and the social-security budgeting implications of such a policy; and what long-term social-security arrangements should be in place for older persons at the end of their working lives. ILO encouraged employment policies based on economic growth, enhanced opportunities for lifelong learning and training, flexible job planning to extend working lives, and innovative and sustainable social security and pension policies.

5. In furtherance of the aims of the World Programme of Action concerning disabled persons, ILO was seeking to equalize employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, by advising member States on developing appropriate legislative and institutional frameworks based on its Conventions, building a supportive environment for the social and economic integration of disabled persons, as well as a code of practice on managing disability and related matters in the workplace.

6. ILO was working in ever closer collaboration with other bodies of the United Nations system in preparing for the special session of the General Assembly in 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. It had also played the leading role in the preparations for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 1999 on the role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women. Those themes, and the global challenges they represented, were among the ILO operational priorities.

7. **Mr. Hudson** (Australia) said that, as the first youth representative to be included in Australia's delegation to the General Assembly, he would focus on youth participation and representation in the United Nations and the international community, which remained less than universally accepted.

8. Persons aged 25 and under constituted 60 per cent of the global population. Their full and effective participation in society and decision-making was the most fundamental aspect of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. In many parts of the world, however, young people were excluded from participation in the decisions that influenced their lives, thus contributing to their alienation from society. Youth participation in policy- and decision-making was also important because it could lead to fresh approaches and new workable solutions to youth problems. In such areas as health care and drug prevention, the participation of young people in designing,

implementing and evaluating programmes was not only a matter of equity but added relevance for the target group.

9. The Australian Government was committed to communicating directly with young people on issues that concerned them. For that purpose, it was developing a programme entitled "Voices of Youth" and it recently created a national youth round table consisting of 50 young Australians from diverse backgrounds who met twice a year with members of Parliament to express their views. National youth media awards had been established to promote positive portrayals of young people in the media, and, in the year 2000, for the first time, a national youth week would be held to celebrate young Australians and promote their contribution to the society.

10. The participation of youth representatives in national delegations to relevant United Nations meetings provided an opportunity for youth perspectives to be considered and enabled the youth representatives to gain a better understanding of the complex political realities that shaped the United Nations agenda and its decisions. Accordingly, Australia wished to encourage other Member States to include young people in their delegations to the General Assembly.

11. **Ms. Enkhtsetseg** (Mongolia) said that while poverty remained a serious problem in Mongolia, some positive social trends were emerging: maternal mortality had begun to decline, primary school enrolment was improving and drop-out rates were down. Child survival conditions were better because of enhanced immunization rates. Reforms were being implemented with a view to developing education, health care and other social and cultural sectors but progress was slow due to lack of resources. Her Government was aware that social and economic policy, environmental concerns and good governance were interconnected, and that those four components of national development must work in harmony.

12. Cooperatives made an important contribution to the realization of social development goals by promoting employment and alleviating poverty, and through their role as production enterprises and providers of services to their members, who numbered almost 800 million worldwide. Her delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the status and role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends (A/54/57), which had been enriched by the information provided by Governments and national cooperative organizations. The draft guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives contained in the annex to the report would give timely guidance to Governments on developing or revising their policies on cooperatives. Her delegation therefore urged the adoption of the draft guidelines by the General Assembly.

13. There were seven cooperative alliances comprising 2,000 individual cooperatives in Mongolia. Her Government had adopted a national programme for the development of cooperatives and established a national council charged with monitoring the implementation of the programme under the chairmanship of the Minister of Agriculture and Industry. The programme's main objective was to involve cooperatives in the promotion of national development goals, particularly job creation, poverty reduction and the provision of reliable social services to the population. Mongolia's national legislation on cooperatives had been revised in 1998 to incorporate the main principles of the Statement on Cooperative Identity adopted in 1995 at the Centennial Congress of the International Cooperative Alliance.

14. Mongolia attached particular importance to the attainment of the goals of the World Declaration on Education for All. Her delegation was therefore disappointed that the interim report of the Secretary-General and of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on progress towards the goal of education for all: the year 2000 Assessment (A/54/128-E/1999/70) contained no substantive proposals regarding the launching of a United Nations decade to eradicate illiteracy, despite a request to that effect in General Assembly resolution 52/84. Mongolia believed that such an initiative would spur the international community to make a renewed political commitment to rendering quality education accessible to all. Her delegation would be submitting a draft resolution on education for all requesting the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO to submit a proposal, accompanied by a plan of action, to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session with a view to proclaiming the period 2001-2010 as the United Nations decade to eradicate illiteracy.

15. **Mr. Jassim** (Bahrain) said that Bahrain had always provided equal access, free of charge, to education, health care and social welfare as essential components of human rights. It had made strenuous efforts to improve the qualifications of its young people, develop their intellectual capacities and promote their social advancement.

16. With more than 70 per cent of government spending allocated to the infrastructure, social, economic and educational sectors, the benefits of development had been made available to the community in general, and had resulted in Bahrain's high ranking in the UNDP Human Development Index over the past five years.

17. The family was the fundamental nucleus of society and was recognized as such by the Constitution of Bahrain. Many of the country's governmental and non-governmental agencies had accordingly implemented family-oriented programmes, and the Bahrain Family Planning and Family Welfare Association had been established in 1975 in order to promote awareness of the concepts of family planning and reproductive health as legitimate human rights.

18. Bahrain had participated actively in the observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999. Respect for older persons was a cultural trait that was reflected in the country's policy and doubtless stemmed from the heritage of the people of Bahrain and the customs, traditions and values that embodied the principles of the Islamic religion and enjoined respect for parents and concern for the well-being of the elderly. The State had established legal guarantees of full rights for older persons and had enacted legislation providing for retirement insurance.

19. In implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, Bahrain had made much progress in providing for the welfare of disabled persons. State and non-governmental agencies had accorded special attention to disabled persons in the belief that expenditure on their care and rehabilitation was a productive investment with a direct economic return in terms of human resources development. A National Institution for Services to Disabled Persons had been established, and its tasks included the formulation of appropriate public policy, the drafting of relevant legislation, the preparation of studies to identify needs, and cooperation with regional and international organizations operating in the same field.

20. **Mr. Shen Guofang** (China) said that the basis for global social development was the steady growth of the world economy in a stable and peaceful environment. To counter the adverse effects on that economy of the financial crises in some countries over the past two years all members of the international community must work together to promote steady economic growth in a spirit of responsibility and risk-sharing in order to achieve prosperity for all.

21. Poverty eradication should be the central task of global social development. Progress towards that goal had been slow thus far, and more than 1 billion people around the world were still living in extreme poverty. Given the economic interdependence deriving from globalization, developed countries had a duty to offer technological and financial assistance to developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty.

22. His delegation hoped that the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000 devoted to the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development would give new impetus to global social development. The topics for discussion should include the impact of globalization, trade liberalization and the information revolution on global social development; problems related to rural development; and the enhancement of the role of the United Nations in coordinating international cooperation for social development. Developed countries should be urged to meet the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, and a clear timetable should be worked out for the realization of that goal.

23. His Government would continue to implement the commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit. It was actively involved in the preparations for the special session. On 11 October 1999, it would host an international symposium on social development. Experts from different regions would be invited to discuss the role of Governments and the market in promoting social progress. The outcome of the symposium would be a direct contribution to the special session.

24. **Mr. Balanandan** (India) said that his delegation had paid close attention to events held to review the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and welcomed the adoption of the Braga Youth Action Plan at the third session of the World Youth Forum held in Portugal. His delegation expressed appreciation to the Governments of Turkey and Senegal for offering to host the forthcoming World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and the next session of the World Youth Forum.

25. In an age of information revolution and globalization, issues related to youth should be seen in the context of social and economic development and the potential of youth to be a major force for social change through increased participation in political systems should be specifically acknowledged.

26. Five years after the declaration of the International Year of the Family in 1994, there was a need to take stock of new developments affecting the family. Problems arising from broken homes, neglect, economic stress and inter-generational conflict were on the rise everywhere. A fresh assessment of the role of the family as an institution for social stability was needed.

27. The role of education as the primary instrument of progress could not be overstated. His delegation fully supported the report of the Secretary-General and of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/54/128-E/1999/70), which redefined education as going beyond literacy, to include the

acquisition of skills and competence in different social settings.

28. Persons with disabilities should be targeted more effectively by the social services in order to unleash their productive potential. Education and affirmative action to provide sustainable livelihoods for the disabled were a necessity. The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the United Nations Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond were important initiatives in achieving that objective.

29. While the significance of cooperatives had dwindled in the context of rapid globalization and corporate transnationalism, cooperatives now had a new role to play as organizations for self-help and self-reliance. By pooling resources, contributing voluntary labour and bargaining collectively, societies could provide themselves with health care, education and other basic services at the grass-roots level without awaiting action by Governments. His delegation therefore welcomed the guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/54/57), and was glad to have co-sponsored the draft resolution on cooperatives.

30. **Ms. Oliverio-Relang** (Marshall Islands) said that, over the last three years, her country had faced the challenge of economic reforms, natural phenomena such as El Niño and the effects of the Asian financial crisis. Together with the country's high population growth rate of 3.8 per cent, those factors had affected social development. The Marshall Islands endorsed unreservedly the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, particularly the 20/20 principle, and spent more than 20 per cent of its budget on social issues. Its national policies on population, women and youth were the primary instruments for fulfilling the commitments made at the Summit.

31. To overcome the difficulties of living in a small island developing State where the main services and activities were concentrated in only two urban centres, the country had established a mobile team for community development to provide outlying communities with information on nutrition and population issues. The Ministry of Education carried out a similar campaign on community-based local governance for outer island local governments and communities. Those efforts were intended to empower communities for social development at the grass-roots level. In addition, the Government would convene a second National Economic and Social Summit to build partnerships for the benefit of the outer island communities.

32. With 50 per cent of its population under the age of 15, the Government faced major challenges in ensuring social development, equality and progress and in meeting the steadily increasing demand for educational and health services. Government initiatives such as the National Youth Policy would help young people to meet some of the challenges of the new millennium. In addition, the non-governmental organization Youth to Youth in Health implemented a programme on health awareness, leadership skills, peer teaching and cultural appreciation that targeted young people at high risk for unwanted pregnancy, suicide or alcohol abuse. The success of that programme was largely responsible for the continuing decline in births among teenagers. Currently, the organization was seeking donor contributions to build a youth health centre; the Government stood ready to provide information on that project to interested donor countries and agencies.

33. **Mr. Ryan** (Ireland) said that, in October 1998, Ireland had hosted the United Nations Workshop on Technology and Families. In exploring the impact of the technological revolution on families, the Workshop had emphasized the areas of education, communication and information; work and employment; and health and basic social services. It had focused, *inter alia*, on the societal and lifestyle consequences of the introduction of technology into society.

34. The participants in the Workshop had called for research on the impact of technology on families, for parallel development of opportunities through adult education and for early recognition that families should not become simply passive recipients of services. In addition, they had agreed that the privacy and integrity of personal information stored on computer must be protected. The findings of the Workshop would help to guide Governments in investigating the changes experienced by families as a result of technological innovation. Of particular relevance were the employment opportunities generated through a more directed application of new technologies, *inter alia* for disabled family members.

35. The discussions at the Workshop had also dealt with the special needs of developing countries in coping with modern technology and the ways in which new communications technologies could increase access to health and basic services in those countries. The participants had recommended the use of family impact assessments in framing policies involving technology. Moreover, they had acknowledged the potential of non-governmental organizations to help families minimize the negative impact

of the Internet on children and young people and to act as partners in the delivery of social services and preventive health care.

36. **Mr. Rabuka** (Fiji) said that improved longevity had created the "greying" of society in Fiji so that between 1995 and 2025, the number of people over the age of 60 was expected to increase by 233 per cent. However, the economic and social implications of that demographic shift were not yet fully recognized or understood. Senior citizens in Fiji were not required to pay value-added tax on basic food items or on medical expenses and supplies. Plans were under way to make available loans of up to $2,000 from the country's Poverty Alleviation Fund, improve social security for the elderly and destitute and enable self-employed persons to contribute to the Fiji National Provident Fund so that they could benefit from the Fund's retirement scheme.

37. Discrimination on the ground of disability was prohibited in Fiji, and aggrieved persons could seek legal redress for denial of their fundamental human rights. The National Council for Disabled Persons provided the framework for government action with respect to the disabled and for the implementation of the relevant international instruments. The Government was committed to ensuring the rehabilitation of the disabled so that they could be gainfully employed. It acknowledged that more could be done to guarantee the full and equal participation of the disabled in community affairs and to ensure the exercise of their human rights, but it needed time and resources to meet its obligations.

38. The dissolution of the extended family owing to the migration of some family members to urban areas in search of employment presented a major social challenge. The Government of Fiji was committed to strengthening the family; to that end, it was reviewing the current rates of taxation and allowances. The family component of development projects and the family activities of the specialized agencies should be strengthened to build institutional capacity for research, data collection and collaboration among States and to support the formulation and implementation of family-related policies and programmes in developing countries, especially small island developing States.

39. Fiji agreed with the view, expressed in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/54/59), that the situation and prospects of young people were closely related to the general economic and social conditions in each country and to the State's economic ability to generate employment. Fiji was carrying out a number of activities to implement the World Programme of Action, including agricultural and non-agricultural skill training, youth training and the formulation and implementation of an integrated intersectoral policy for youth development in the new millennium. Society as a whole paid the price for the high rates of youth unemployment and underemployment.

40. Fiji appreciated the World Bank's enhanced poverty strategy, which would involve the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other actors. However, national efforts to achieve economic growth required an enabling international trading environment imbued with a strong sense of economic and social justice. In particular, small island developing States such as Fiji could not receive an equitable share of the benefits of the global trading system without improved market access, special and differential treatment of their products and enhanced institutional capacity to make the most of global trading opportunities. In the forthcoming World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on trade liberalization, it must be borne in mind that the global trading system could not become a level playing field without the free movement of human capital. The failure to incorporate human resources into globalization and trade liberalization was responsible for the slow economic development of many developing countries.

41. Fiji was disappointed by the apparent reluctance of its partners to meet their obligations under the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The international community could not turn a blind eye to the situation of the poor in developing countries or to the efforts made at the national level to address the needs and concerns of the poor. The commitments made at the international level must be translated into action to help the poor regain their dignity and find a meaningful existence.

42. **Mr. Al-Sudairy** (Saudi Arabia) said that his Government was doing its utmost to achieve the highest standards of social development. The country's Basic Law of Government, which was based on the teachings of Islam and the principle of consultation, ensured a secure social climate through the enactment of laws and regulations that protected members of society from injustice and discrimination or anything that might restrict their freedom of movement or action. Social welfare services helped to protect the community from deviance and adverse social manifestations while endeavouring to make inactive human resources productive and self-supporting.

43. The Social Security Administration had been established in 1962, and its functions included the oversight

and regulation of assistance to entitled families and individuals. It provided two types of assistance, namely allowances and welfare benefits. Allowances were for those disabled by advanced age, for orphans and the fatherless and for widows and divorced women who had no one to support them; and welfare benefits were for the totally disabled, the families of prison inmates and the victims of random catastrophes and disasters.

44. The Government's efforts were supplemented by those of charitable institutions and non-governmental organizations motivated by Islamic principles and teachings. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs encouraged citizens to establish voluntary organizations to meet the needs of individuals and groups at the local level, and there were 142 such charitable societies that received annual subsidies from the Government.

45. Pursuant to the Government's policy of promoting the welfare and productive employment of disabled persons, opportunities were available to them in governmental and non-governmental agencies. In workplaces where 50 or more persons were employed, and where the nature of the work permitted, at least 2 per cent of the workforce were required to be suitably trained disabled persons.

46. The health care provided by the Saudi Arabian Government in pursuance of the principle of "Health for all" as a national strategy had produced effective results. The statistics on numbers of doctors, hospitals, hospital beds and health centres and on the ratios of doctors and nurses to the general population showed that there had been a great and rapid expansion in health care with a high percentage of the population immunized against major diseases resulting in a sharp decline in the numbers of victims of such diseases. Saudi Arabia ranked with the industrially advanced countries in terms of its infant mortality rate and under-5 mortality rate.

47. Saudi Arabia had achieved the goals established in the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. It had done so through a combination of conservatism and contemporaneity. Its conservatism had focused on the preservation of religious and moral values through the application of Islamic principles, and its contemporaneity had consisted in the pursuit of overall development with a view to ensuring the well-being of the members of the community with due regard for the formation of a worthy and productive citizenry that was aware of its responsibilities and its role in serving society.

48. **Mr. García González** (El Salvador) said that he supported the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China under agenda item 106. In line with the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the elements suggested in the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond, his Government had set up a national commission to propose revisions and reforms of current legislation concerning disabled persons which had led to the establishment of a National Council for the General Welfare of Persons with Disabilities (CONAIPD) to meet the enormous demand from Salvadorans who suffered from some type of disability as a direct result of the armed conflict.

49. The Council was made up of a number of government Ministries and institutions that dealt *inter alia* with the family, health, education, labour and social security and of various non-governmental organizations. It had prepared a draft law on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, which would introduce a legal regime for persons with any type of physical or mental disability and would establish the care institutions and agencies they required. The Council had also prepared a policy document on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Those efforts had been widely publicized through an information programme on disability designed to raise awareness of the issue and to suggest ways in which the population could support the Council's activities.

50. National efforts to assist the disabled must be linked to those of the international community, particularly through the implementation of the relevant suggestions made at the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. He hoped that national and international efforts would be redoubled to ensure that the deliberations at the 2002 quinquennial review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action adequately reflected the issues that must be addressed in the areas of social integration, technology, information and comprehensive protection to guarantee equitable development for the disabled in the new millennium.

51. **Mr. Sergiwa** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that at the threshold of the new millennium the world social situation was deteriorating: the rich were getting richer, and the poor were getting poorer; unemployment was on the rise; and in many countries social inequality was growing. The situation would continue to worsen in the absence of the political will to create an international climate that was supportive of national efforts to eliminate poverty, create full and productive employment and achieve social integration.

52. The disabled constituted a vulnerable group that merited the concern of the international community to integrate them into their societies and to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had taken the initiative with respect to the proclamation of 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons and had chaired the Advisory Committee for the Year. Its concern for disabled persons and the fact that it had sought to alert the international community to their plight should not be surprising because the country continued to have a great number of citizens who had been disabled by the mines and other remnants of war left there after the Second World War. His delegation reiterated its demand that the countries responsible should comply with the General Assembly resolutions requiring them to remove the mines and to provide compensation for the damage caused. The mines were still maiming, disabling and killing innocent people.

53. The breakup of families and the disappearance of the extended family from any societies had exacerbated the problems faced by older persons and had led to a search for alternative ways to provide them with social services. The observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 had been a step in the right direction and had promoted awareness of the needs of the elderly and of their contributions to society.

54. His delegation affirmed the right of young people to education, employment and health care. The implementation at the national level of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond level would promote the formulation of integrated national youth policies designed to satisfy the needs and aspirations of young people and to involve them in all matters that concerned them.

55. Among the social and economic measures and policies aimed at developing its human resources, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya provided education to all free of charge until completion of the elementary level, free health services, and free social security services for widows, disabled persons and the elderly. It strived for equality between the sexes, enhancement of the role of women in development and the protection of the family as the foundation of society. It had enacted legislation providing numerous benefits to disabled people, enhancing their role in society and insuring equal opportunities for them. Special attention was paid to developing the skills and abilities of young people by ensuring their right to education, quality health care and employment and by meeting their special needs and promoting their participation in development and decision-making.

56. Those developments had taken place despite the coercive economic sanctions imposed on the Libyan people in the early 1990s, which had caused it enormous losses and had impeded plans and programmes designed to meet the needs of vulnerable groups in society.

57. **Ms. Ramiro Lopez** (Philippines) said that the situation of persons with disabilities in her country was of increasing concern to her Government since about 10 per cent of the population was disabled. Government policy stressed prevention of disability, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, protecting their rights and providing services to hasten their integration into society. The human rights of disabled persons had been protected by the adoption of the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons in 1992, the inclusion of a separate section on disabled persons in the national human rights plan for the period 1996-2000, and the strengthening of the accessibility law.

58. Her delegation noted with satisfaction the encouraging developments outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/54/388), including the increased interest of non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector in equalizing opportunities for persons with disabilities through the innovative use of information technology. Her delegation expressed its appreciation to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for its assistance in organizing the seminar on Internet accessibility and persons with disabilities that had been sponsored by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

59. Further efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and equalize opportunities for them were needed. Her delegation would welcome an exchange of best practices in those areas and a greater focus on the needs of disabled children. In that regard, it was crucial to generate information and comparable data in order to monitor and promote the implementation of the World Programme of Action. Her delegation called upon Member States to make use of the technical expertise of the United Nations Statistics Division for that purpose.

60. The global youth population, now numbered one billion, and the magnitude of youth concerns could not be ignored. Her Government had formulated a medium-term youth development plan for the period 1999-2004 and had strengthened the participation of youth in governance by appointing a Commissioner on Youth and establishing a capacity-building programme for youth leaders. Her delegation noted with satisfaction the increasing number of Member States that had implemented national youth

programmes and welcomed the holding in Portugal in 1998 of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System.

61. Her delegation also welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal that United Nations research and policy initiatives should be focused on the further implementation of the World Programme of Action, as stated in paragraph 92 of document A/54/59. Her Government also supported efforts to strengthen the Youth Unit of the Secretariat through the provision of United Nations interns and volunteers.

62. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the International Year of the Family (A/54/256), she said that her Government was continuing to implement its plan of action for the family for the period 1994-2000. That plan addressed family concerns in such areas as livelihoods, family values and culture, criminality and domestic violence. Her delegation supported actions that included a family-sensitive approach to development strategies; for that reason, it welcomed the family-related activities of the Secretariat, including the efforts to monitor the impact of global social and economic trends on families.

63. Beyond national efforts, addressing pressing social development issues required international cooperation. There was a need to prepare human resources, particularly in developing countries, for globalization and modernization, while at the same time promoting greater social cohesion.

64. **Mr. Donokusumo** (Indonesia) said that the impact of the global economy on youth had been particularly harsh in some countries. Declining levels of official development assistance and financial flows, as well as debt obligations, had adversely affected the daily lives of young people. His delegation therefore agreed with the Secretary-General that youth problems should be seen in the context of the current state of international cooperation and it reaffirmed the importance of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

65. His Government had incorporated issues concerning youth into its five-year development plans. Despite recent setbacks, Indonesian young people had continued to play an active and vibrant role in the exercise of democracy.

66. His delegation welcomed the interim report of the Secretary-General and of the Director-General of UNESCO on progress towards the goal of education for all by the year 2000 (A/54/128-E/1999/70) and the fact that more than two thirds of the world's population were now literate. His Government remained committed to achieving the goal of basic education for all by the year 2003.

67. His delegation supported initiatives to increase awareness of international norms and standards for the disabled that were essential if disabled persons were to engage in mainstream activities. In 1997 his Government had adopted Public Act No. 4 on the Disabled Person, which stipulated the equal rights of the disabled, including their right to have access to social services. His Government remained committed to strengthening the social safety net and to providing, within its limited means, for the disabled and other vulnerable groups.

68. **Mr. Fadaifard** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the momentum of social development in Iran had quickened, with further initiatives being taken to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and with global awareness on ageing being raised as a result of the observance of the International Year of Older Persons. Nevertheless, nearly five years after the World Summit for Social Development, progress towards compliance with the Summit commitments had not been as great as had been hoped.

69. Although Governments bore the primary responsibility for the creation of an enabling environment for social development, the international community must participate in that effort in view of the interdependence between national and international economies. Trade issues, in particular the removal of non-trade barriers and unilateral coercive measures, needed to be addressed. Another area of concern was the unfavourable international financial situation, which had derailed the social development efforts of developing countries in recent years.

70. The goal of full employment was also far from having been achieved. The problem needed to be addressed nationally, by supporting the private and informal sectors, promoting self-employment, providing credit facilities to the unemployed, encouraging the creation of volunteer organizations and investing in training programmes; internationally, by dismantling trade barriers, ensuring adequate capital flows to developing nations, encouraging technology transfer, alleviating the debt burden and sharing experiences.

71. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran accorded the highest priority to social justice, understood as the creation of equal opportunities for all citizens, particularly in their access to social services. It had made social development one of the prime objectives of its second five-year national development plan instituted in 1995. Despite the adverse effects of external conflict, social indicators showed that during the second decade of the Islamic Revolution the country had made great strides in the implementation of social development plans, although their

sustainability would require fundamental economic reforms. Some measures to improve the economic condition of lower-income families had been taken and others were planned under both the second and third five-year plans.

72. Recognizing the importance of involving youth in the cultural, social and economic life of the society, the Government in March 1999 had created the National Youth Centre as the executive body for the previously established Supreme Council for Youth. Some of the main functions of the Centre were to coordinate policy implementation with other organizations, both governmental and non-governmental; devise and execute projects to meet the needs of young people; help create new vocational and educational opportunities; ensure greater access of young couples to housing; and conduct studies on issues of importance to youth. Other promising initiatives for youth included the establishment of a parliamentary committee on women, family and youth and the creation of a data bank on youth. Among the successes were observable increases in levels of education and rates of employment.

73. **Mr. Ocazionez** (Colombia) said that his delegation supported the statements made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and by Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group.

74. His delegation noted with satisfaction the efforts made by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission for Social Development for the implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

75. Science and technology had made an impressive contribution to the well-being of persons with disabilities, especially by improving their mobility and speech capacities. While his delegation welcomed the opportunities offered by the Internet, efforts should be made to ensure that technological advances helped to eliminate the disparities in living conditions between the North and South countries.

76. In Colombia, the situation of persons with disabilities was a growing public health problem. Accordingly, his Government had announced a national plan of action for disabled persons for the period 1999-2002. While there were as yet no reliable statistics on the size of the disabled population, it was estimated that about 4.5 million Colombians suffered from physical, sensory and mental limitations. For that reason, his delegation expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the United Nations Statistics Division to prepare a manual that could assist countries in compiling data.

77. The national plan was his Government's response to the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 52/82 concerning accessibility, provision of services and employment for the disabled. It encompassed such areas as prevention and rehabilitation, education, family and job integration, greater access to sports, cultural recreation and tourism, as well as communication and transport.

78. The plan's main goals were to reduce the frequency of events leading to disability and invalidity, to strengthen and expand social services, and to increase the economic and social integration of persons with disabilities. His Government hoped that its efforts would be strengthened through international cooperation with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

79. **Mr. Mahbubani** (Singapore) said that it was far from certain that Western society had found the right answers to the social questions facing all nations. Many developed Western societies were plagued by high crime rates, high personal insecurity, high divorce rates, growing numbers of single-parent families and increasing drug use. Nevertheless, they continued to export their values vigorously. Many of those values were being transported through the television programmes and movies that reached into homes everywhere thanks to satellite TV. The lifestyles deemed acceptable in Hollywood — single parenthood, gay marriages, drug consumption — were unfortunately seen as models by many young people around the globe. Each society was obliged to find its own means of educating its people on the dangers of adopting such lifestyles.

80. Western values were being exported actively through proselytizing and coercion. As an example, the European Union planned to introduce a resolution in the Committee calling upon all States to abolish the death penalty and was prepared to coerce some developing countries, especially aid recipients, to vote in favour of the social value systems it favoured.

81. The point at issue was not the merits of the death penalty but the right of a small group of countries from one continent to impose their views on the rest of the world. Each society made its decision on the death penalty on the basis of a complex matrix of social, cultural and religious values. In pushing for abolition of the death penalty the European Union was declaring that its value system was superior to those of other societies. Many European values, such as the rule of law, had been proven to be of great benefit and had been adopted by other countries. But they had made that choice voluntarily; it had not been forced to upon them.

82. It might seem strange to speak at length about the death penalty in a speech about the importance of the family,

but the issues were interrelated. Value systems all over the world were being challenged by the new global onslaught of information and new forms of cultural imperialism. Societies outside of the developed world were being subjected to social, economic and political pressures to change. If the family patterns found in many developed societies became the global norm, the traditional family composed of two parents in a stable marriage who protected and nurtured their children might be endangered.

83. The twenty-first century would witness a great social debate, a new Darwinian contest for the survival of the best social values and practices. Ideally each society should be allowed to choose freely. The problem was that the developed societies would like to use the political and economic strength they had accumulated to force the rest of the world to accept their social prescription. It was to be hoped that the Committee would not allow such coercion to succeed.

84. **Mr. Mutaboba** (Rwanda) said that the Government of Rwanda had been working to reverse the terrible devastation caused by the wave of killing in 1994 and to move forward on a path of social development that emphasized the inherent capacities and values of individuals. With support from friendly countries and international institutions, it had rehabilitated infrastructure, including industries, roads, and technical institutions, so that production had increased. Basic commodities and services were once again available. Inflation had been reduced to 2 per cent, to the great satisfaction of the citizens, as well as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The country's financial institutions had been granting soft loans to finance individual projects. Nonetheless, much remained to be done. Unemployment and health problems, notably HIV/AIDS and malaria, presented a difficult challenge. Rwanda appealed to the international community to supplement the efforts of the Government.

85. Rwanda had a separate Ministry of Youth because of the importance it attached to youth issues. The experience of Rwanda showed how grave the youth problem could be when young people were misdirected into criminal activities. The majority of the genocidal forces in 1994 had been drawn from the ranks of youth and trained by the ruling genocidal regime to serve as militia. As a result, much time and effort had to be spent to rehabilitate young people who had been turned into killers and rapists. Another youth initiative had been to organize solidarity camps to bring together young people from all over the country to engage in open political dialogue. The majority of Rwandan youth were unaware of their human rights and had to be taught.

86. Since poverty could lead youth into dubious activities, the Government and civil society worked hand in hand to set up micro-credit schemes to fund joint ventures, thus creating employment and improving standards of living. Technical institutions had been set up to teach urgently needed skills, thanks to the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, the United States of America, the Russian Federation and other friendly nations.

87. As in other African societies, it was natural to Rwandans to respect older persons as sources of inspiration, guidance and knowledge of the past. Many older persons had been left on their own when their families had been massacred in 1994 and were receiving government assistance. The events of 1994 had also left many people injured, physically or mentally. They had been organized into cooperative movements to make assistance easier, and some were living together in so-called "grouped villages", an arrangement which improved morale.

88. **The Chairman** drew attention to Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/18 entitled "Policies and programmes involving youth", contained in document A/C.3/54/L.2, which had been recommended by the Council for adoption by the General Assembly.

89. **Ms. Paiva** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the sponsors of the resolution in the Commission for Social Development, announced a revision to the text in the form of the addition of a new paragraph to follow paragraph 15. The proposed new paragraph was similar to paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 52/83 and read:

> "*Reiterates* the call made in the World Programme of Action to Member States to consider including youth representatives in their delegations to the General Assembly and other relevant United Nations meetings, thus broadening the channels of communication and enhancing the discussion of youth-related issues, and requests the Secretary-General to convey again this invitation to Member States;"

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.